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Ballad of Tangle Street

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Ballad of Tangle Street.

THE BALLAD OF TANGLE STREET



THE BALLAD OF TANGLE STREET

By Peggy Bacon



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NEW YORK

1929

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TO MOTHER

*Dear Mummy: hark the doggerel bard
unreeling verses by the yard;
you've listened to their like before
and borne it well—so here's some more!*

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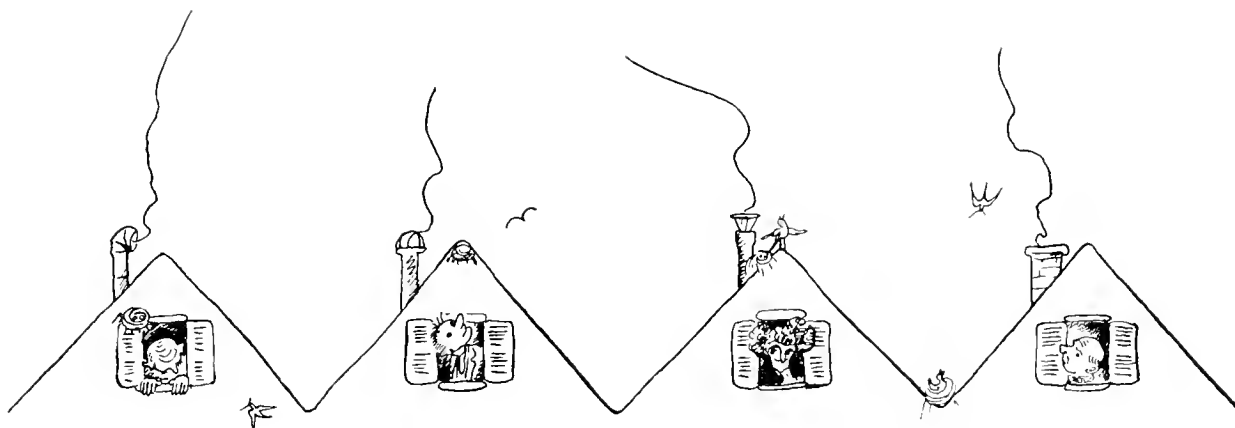
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THE BALLAD OF TANGLE STREET

PROPERTY OF THE
CITY OF NEW YORK
PART I: THE SETTING

Go, little children wild and rough,
'tis not for you I'm writing;
to listen would be dull enough,
the story's not exciting.

But little children meek and mild,
who love your cream of wheat,
come hither, hark and be beguiled
by tale of Tangle Street.

All up and down this lovely street
you see each shop and dwelling,
with every kind of trade complete
for buying and for selling;

and all the different people too,
who keep the world a-spinning;
I'll introduce them now to you,
right here at the beginning.

There's Mr. Sheen, the jeweller,
and Mr. Tweed, the tailor,
and Tony, ice and fueller,
retired Italian sailor;

the undertaker, Mr. Weeps,
the lawyer, Mr. Warner,
while Mr. Green the chemist keeps
the drug-store on the corner.

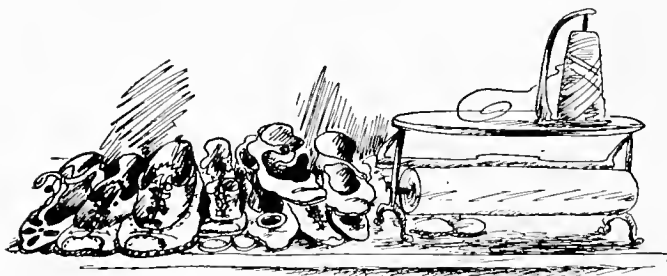
For dry-goods, Mrs. Rose O'Gore;
the Hotel Happy Harbour;
there's Mr. Rivet's hardware store,
and Jerry Clipp, the barber;

and Mrs. Muggins' oldest boy
to Jerry is apprenticed;
the secretary, Miss McCoy,
will marry Digge, the dentist.



Bright orange, lemon, carrot, beet,
pomegranate and banana
all color up the quiet street,—
hurrah for Mr. Manna!

The cleaning-woman, Mrs. Mop,
and all her little daughters
live back of the tobacco shop;
you cannot see her quarters.



Observe the shop of Carraway,
confectioner and baker;
and far below the light of day
the cobbler and shoemaker.

See Dr. Carver in his car
a-speeding to his patients.
Policeman Socker stands afar,
longing for sensations.

On Sundays in the little church
with tinkles in its steeple,
old Dr. Burble climbs his perch
and preaches to the people.

A music-teacher, Miss M'Love,
lives opposite Miss Button,—
Miss Button's window shows above
the butcher, Mr. Mutton.

If weather be a trifle gray
Miss Button wears galoshes,
and in a backyard every day
Mrs. Muggins washes.



PART II: THE HEROINE

Enter the cat. Whose cat? Ah, whose!

Fat Mrs. Muggins hails her:

“Here, Patty, Patty!” Patty mews.

Her breakfast never fails her.

She drinks the bowl of tepid milk,
she purrs, her pleasure voicing;
she makes her fur as smooth as silk
and goes her way rejoicing.

“Hello there, Sarsparilla dear,”
says pleasant Mr. Green,
“My pretty puss, come over here
and sample a sardine.”

“Here Gobble,” Mr. Mutton calls
and drops a hunk of liver,
the which the kitten overhauls
and swallows in a quiver.

And next from Mrs. Rose O’Gore
she culls a baked potato.

The tailor calls the kit “Lenore,”
the dentist calls her “Cato.”

She answers to a different name
each family she goes to,
and she could lay a special claim
to any home she chose to.

Chopped beef the barber serves the cat,
the cobbler gives spaghetti.
Policeman Socker calls her “Scat,”
the doctor calls her “Petty,”

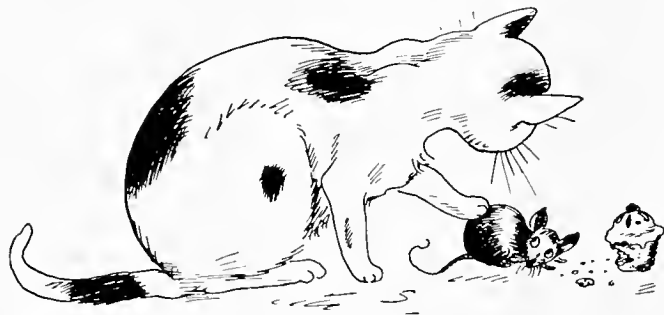
and gives the cook strict orders, too,
(yes, daily he repeats it)
to feed her healthful cabbage stew,
though “Petty” never eats it.



Miss Button calls the cat "Èlise,"
and feeds her fresh farina.
The ice-man, Tony, gives her cheese
and calls her "Concertina."

While thrifty Mrs. Carraway
considers her a mouser,
and saving for a mouse a day,
no other food allows her.

To the hotel she'll go perhaps
to taste, if nothing hinders,
the dish of interesting scraps
that's waiting there for "Cinders."



She pays a call on Mrs. Mop,
who loves her most uncommon;
drops in at Manna's grocery shop
and eats a can of salmon;

From Miss M'Love a dish of cream,
from Miss McCoy a cracker,
with such attentions it would seem
that nothing more could lack her.

And so she goes from house to house
to folk so kindly giving;
with here a meal and there a mouse
she makes a handsome living,

while each believes the cat to be
his own especial kitty.
Sure, ne'er could beast more feasted be
in any town or city!



PART III: THE SURPRISE

But lo, a dreadful day has come
that ne'er shall be forgotten.
Somewhere, somehow, it seems to some,
there's something wrong and rotten!

It all commenced with Mr. Green
who called his "Sarsparilla"
just when the grocery-man was seen
caressing his "Vanilla."

Ensues an angry argument.
"She's mine," declares the grocer.
The druggist, though a gentle gent,
retorts: "It is not so, sir!"

Now at the sound of noisy talk
the folk begin to gather:
the barber steps to the sidewalk
and leaves a man in lather;

From back of the tobacco shop
the little Mops come tumbling,
and from the basement area, pop!
appears the cobbler, grumbling.

Says Mr. Sheen: "Why, there's my cat!"
"Your cat!" shouts Mr. Mutton.
"I never heard the like of that!"
"Élise!" implores Miss Button.

"The cat is mine! My stars above,
why all of you are crazy!"
"And so are you," cries Miss M'Love,
"for that's my darling Daisy!"

The pastor says: "It seems to me
that here's the gentle Sukey;
each afternoon she comes to tea
to take a bit of cooky."



But canny Mrs. Carraway
quoth: "If I board and house her
the cat is mine, as sure as day,
and she's a splendid mouser."

The littlest Mop upon the ground
lies bellowing for "Snowdrop!"
Her older sisters stand around,
their heavy tears and slow drop.

And plaintive Mrs. Rose O'Gore,
no bitter language hurling,
laments: "I'll never see her more
behind my counter curling."



The hotel-keeper, Mr. Clutch,
declares she's over-rated,
and that he wouldn't mind so much
if she were confiscated.

Policeman Socker joins the crowd
and finds it most unruly.
Fat Mrs. Muggins weeping loud
bewails her fate unduly.

Excited Tony, raging hot,
cries: "She's my Concertina,
and anybody say she's not,
I crack him on da beana!"

Meanwhile the cat observes the brawl
with manner calm and queenly,
reveals no interest at all
but walks away serenely.



PART IV: THE COMPLICATIONS

"MASS MEETING. COME. To-night at 8. . . .

To Hotel make a bee-line. . . .

The purpose: to decide the fate
and ownership of feline. . . ."

The people read the notice through
('twas posted by the barber).

The hour is struck, they gather to
the Hotel Happy Harbor.

The couples chatter as they come;
the mob grows ever thicker,
and makes the hotel lobby hum
with argument and bicker.

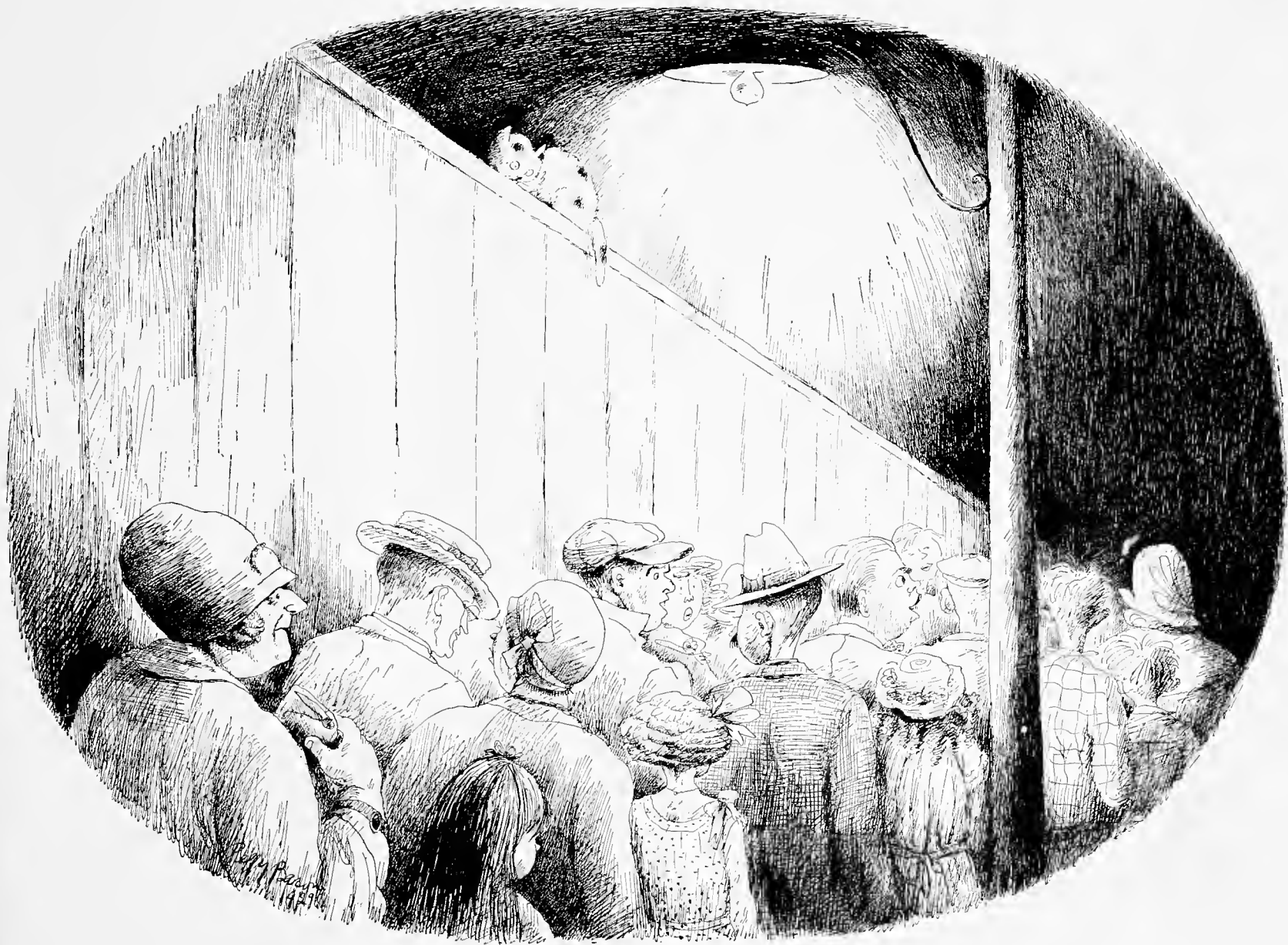
Good Mr. Warner rose at that:
"The meeting's called to order.
We come to parley for the cat—
to whom shall we award her?"

"Those who would make in any wise
a declaration verbal,
present it now." The next to rise
was dear old Dr. Burble.

"To be unselfish is my aim,"
the rector said, "so look ye,
I therefore now renounce my claim
to precious little Sukey."

Then Dr. Carver added: "I've
more work than I can mention;
to Petty dear I can't contrive
to pay enough attention."

Policeman Socker rose to say:
"I'll give my share and gladly,
I see her plenty anyway."
Said Mr. Warner sadly:



“To Sybil I forego my right,
though greatly I’ve adored her.”
Then Mr. Clutch, with plain delight
arose the next in order.



“We’ve nineteen other mangy cats.
I don’t intend to flout her,
but as she’s poor at catching rats,
I guess I’ll do without her.”

The five above are counted out.
The rest, with angry jangle,
continued still to rant and shout
to battle, rage, and wrangle.

And since the people, saving those,
were bent upon their mission,
again good Mr. Warner rose
to make a proposition:

“The interest in this cat is wide
and such attention shown her,
’tis meet to make the cat decide
which one shall be her owner.

“To-morrow, let us stand about
with dainty gifts or hearty;
the person Sybil singles out
shall be the lucky party.”

This project seemed both just and right
to the entire number;
they all agreed and said good-night,
and so retired to slumber.



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PART V: THE ADJUSTMENT

Next morning saw a busy street,
each person standing quiet,
and holding for the cat to eat
its customary diet.

Fat Mrs. Muggins holds the warm
and overflowing saucer,
and Mr. Manna, true to form,
with salmon still implores her.

And Mr. Mutton liver shows;
Miss Button brings farina;
while Tony, Gorgonzola chose
for darling "Concertina."

And careful Mrs. Carraway
has brought the usual ration—
a mouse that in a mousetrap lay
just caught for the occasion.

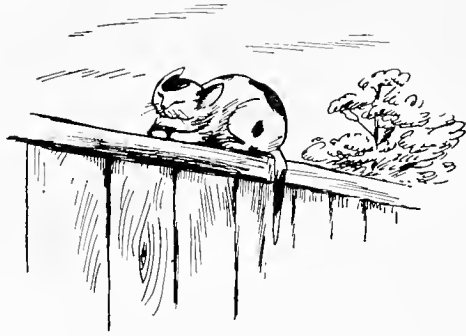
So with the sunrise bright and sweet,
as all are at attention,
around the turn of Tangle Street
appears the cat we mention,

and stalks majestically past,
with eyes that never waver,
the people on the sidewalk massed—
the rivals for her favor.

But lo! the cat regards them not,
their tempting morsels scorning,
and shows indifference to the lot—
no appetite this morning!

Instead she spies with steady gaze
a butterfly a-flutter,
all dreamy white, that lightly sways
above the city gutter.





She snares it by a nimble leap,
consumes it—hark the story!
she washes up and goes to sleep
on neutral territory!

Confusion reigns. The pussy small
bewilderment produces.
The cat, 'tis obvious to all,
to choose a home refuses.

The folk the cat's behavior shocks,
blights, baffles, and depresses;
but Mr. Warner mounts a box
and thus the crowd addresses:

“What you have seen all doubt dispels.
Why question it or quibble?
The cat belongs to no one else,
nay, we belong to Sybil.

“While we our special claims array
and petty merits martial,
she spreads her favors in a way
that's charmingly impartial.

“I now, in view of our defeat,
propose a good solution:
to grant her freedom of the street!
Who'll pass the resolution?”

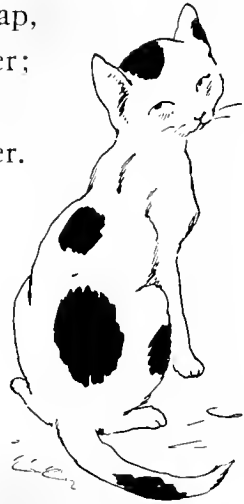
This speech was greeted with applause
and made a big sensation.
The move was passed without a pause
by all the population!



ENVOI

The tale of Tangle Street I close,
but e'er you all dismiss it,
I'll show again how pussy goes
to pay each friendly visit.

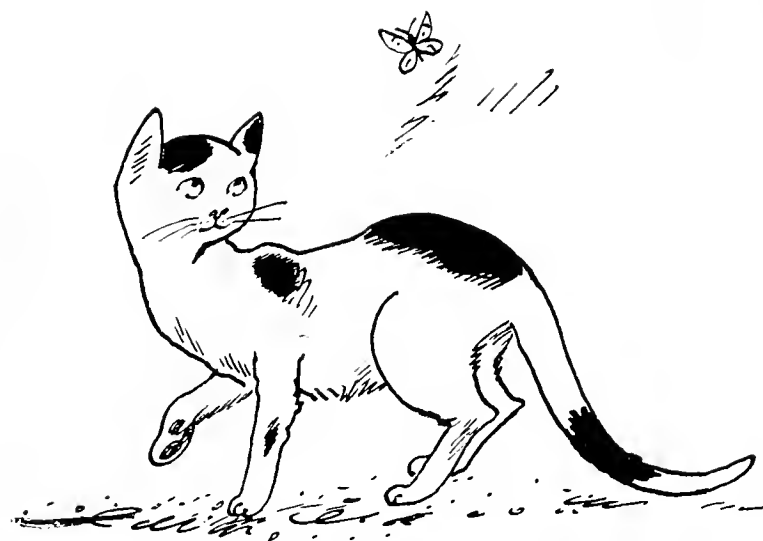
With here a nibble, there a lap,
for all the street endows her;
anon she'll take a placid nap,
anon she'll play the mouser.



More names she answers to I ween,
(you know, if you have listened)
than any continental queen
received when she was christened.

And Tangle Street, so fair and free,
it all belongs to kitty!
Sure, ne'er could beast more feasted be
in any town or city!





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